

ROAD TO SAFETY

Drivers Are Getting The Message About Texting

(NAPSA)—A growing number of people are paying attention to the dangers of driving while distracted. According to a recent survey, U.S. drivers say they are talking and texting less while driving than they did a year ago, and they say it's because they are more aware of what can happen if they are driving while distracted (DWD).

The survey shows that 20 percent of drivers with cell phones say they text while driving and that number jumps to 47 percent for drivers under the age of 35. Of those who admit to texting behind the wheel, 40 percent say they do it less often than they did last year. The survey was sponsored by Nationwide Insurance.

According to the telephone survey of 1,005 U.S. adults conducted by Harris Interactive, 67 percent of drivers admit to talking on their cell phone while driving. Of those who do, 30 percent say they do it less often than they did last year.

While the problem of DWD remains one of the deadliest risks facing drivers, this survey shows that drivers are changing their behavior due to awareness and legislation.

"This is the first survey we've seen showing drivers making positive changes in their behavior, but there are still too many drivers who either don't realize just how dangerous distractions behind the wheel are or are willing to take that risk," said Bill Windsor, Nationwide's associate vice president of Consumer Safety. "The stigma now associated with distracted driving may also have fewer people willing to admit they do it, but studies continue to indi-



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cate that DWD causes one out of every four U.S. crashes."

Hands-free not used widely

While hands-free technology is readily available, two-thirds of drivers surveyed say they rarely or never use the devices. Most drivers who do use a hands-free device report feeling safer when doing so, although nearly one in four of these drivers say they talk more often since they started using the hands-free device.

"This survey shows that it is likely that when handheld cell phone laws are passed that a number of people will switch to hands-free devices and their usage of the phones will actually go up," said Windsor. "More research needs to be done on the extent of crash risk related to the cognitive distraction aspect of cell phone use. We need to be sure that for this segment of heavy users it does not actually result in increased crashes."

To learn more, visit www.nationwide.com.